
SECTION

9

SEVEN YEAR ACTION PLAN

The Seven-Year Action Plan addresses the objectives of the Open Space and Recreation Plan and identifies actions to meet these objectives. While the Open Space and Recreation Planning Committee believe that all of the objectives are important and should be pursued, it is also necessary to establish priorities for the next seven years. At the public forum held on September 23, 2010, members of the Committee and the public identified fourteen objectives for priority implementation during the next seven years. These objectives are represented graphically on the Seven Year Action Plan Map, and are included in Table 9-1 below. The fourteen priority objectives are:

- A.1. Encourage permanent protection of large blocks of contiguous forest and establishment of corridors between existing protected forest parcels.
- A.2. Encourage permanent protection of land along the banks of the Connecticut, Sawmill, and Millers Rivers and support ecological restoration efforts in these watersheds.
- A.10. Promote cleanup and redevelopment of abandoned and underutilized industrial and commercial properties.
- B.7. Develop water conservation strategies.
- C.5. Promote conservation of valuable agricultural soils and permanent protection of farmland through the APR program, consistent with the plans and desires of landowners.
- D.3. Explore the feasibility of developing a park in Montague City.
- F.2. Support the formation of a volunteer “Friends of the Montague Plains” group to assist in stewardship and management of the Plains.
- A.4. Revise Montague Zoning Bylaws to direct development to appropriate areas without devaluing the land and, where possible, to allow clustering of homes on smaller lots to protect open space when land is developed.
- A.7. Consider adoption of a local wetland protection bylaw.
- A.8. Investigate funding mechanisms for Town acquisition of open space, including adoption of the Community Preservation Act by Town Meeting with at least a 1% property tax surcharge.
- C.3. Develop a Right to Farm Bylaw to protect farmers from complaints about odors and sounds due to normal farming activities.
- D.2. Ensure affordability and accessibility of recreational areas and programs to all Montague residents, including development of at least one ADA-accessible facility.
- E.2. Promote environmental education in Montague schools, with a special focus on local resources.
- F.1. Partner with the state Department of Fish and Game to improve management of the Plains.

While these objectives have been identified as priorities for the next seven years, all goals and corresponding objectives from this plan are listed in the far left column of the foldout Table 9-1 in the same order as they appear in Section 8. They are followed in the same row by recommended actions, the board or group responsible for implementation, start dates, and potential funding sources. By implementing the recommended actions, each of the objectives will begin to be realized.

The Open Space and Recreation Planning Committee recommend the creation of three new bodies to facilitate implementation of the Plan: an Open Space Committee, an Agricultural Commission and a non-profit, volunteer “Friends of the Montague Plains” organization. Successful implementation will also require the participation of existing Town boards, committees and staff, including but not limited to the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Parks & Recreation Commission, Board of Health, Fire and Water Districts, Town Planner, Parks & Recreation Director, Health Director and others.

Accomplishing the actions identified in this section will require time and commitment from dedicated volunteers. Where money is required, it may be sought from state and federal governmental agencies, private non-profit conservation agencies, foundations, and individual donations in addition to municipal funds. A broad base of community support for the Open Space and Recreation Plan should facilitate fundraising to achieve its goals and objectives.



Table 9-1: Recommended Action Steps to Implement the Open Space and Recreation Plan

GOALS/OBJECTIVES	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/GROUP	START DATE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCE
Goal A: To conserve native plants and wildlife habitat, protect rivers and streams, river corridors and their watersheds and maintain scenic landscapes.				
A.1. Encourage permanent protection of large blocks of contiguous forest and establish corridors between existing protected parcels.	a. Form an Open Space Committee.	Board of Selectmen	2011	Volunteer time
	b. Identify land in need of protection.	Open Space Committee, Town Planner	2011	Volunteer time; Town funds
	c. Outreach to landowners.	Open Space Committee, Town Planner	2012	Volunteer time; Town funds
	d. Encourage state agencies and non-profit conservation organizations like land trusts to purchase open space.	Board of Selectmen, Town Planner, Open Space Committee	2012	Town funds; volunteer time
A.2. Encourage permanent protection of land along the banks of the Connecticut, Sawmill, and Millers Rivers and support ecological restoration efforts in these watersheds.	a. Identify parcels of unprotected land on banks of Connecticut, Millers and Sawmill Rivers and prioritize them for protection.	Open Space Committee, Town Planner	2011	Town funds; Volunteer time; DFG Riverways Program; DCR CT River Greenways Program
	b. Develop educational material on stewardship of riverbanks and distribute to landowners.	Open Space Committee, Town Planner	2012	Town funds; DFG Riverways Program
	c. Continue to implement the recommendations from the Sawmill River restoration plan.	Natural Resources Conservation Service, Franklin Conservation District, Town Planner	Ongoing	Town funds; DFG Riverways Program; NRCS s. 319 Program
	d. Advocate to ensure ongoing commitment from SUEZ Energy and FirstLight Power to implement the Erosion Control Plan for the Connecticut River.	Connecticut River Streambank Erosion Committee, Town Planner	Ongoing	Volunteer time; Town funds
A.3. Work closely with the Turners Falls Fire District to safeguard the future of watershed lands.	a. Ensure that the Turners Falls Fire District and Water Department and the Montague Center Water District are represented on the Open Space Committee.	Town Planner	2011	Town funds
A.4. Revise Montague Zoning Bylaws to direct development to appropriate areas without devaluing the land and, where possible, to allow clustering of homes on smaller lots to protect open space when land is developed.	a. Assess current Zoning Bylaws and evaluate need for changes.	Planning Board, Town Planner	2012	Town funds; volunteer time
	b. Review cluster development bylaws from other towns' regulations and develop a cluster development bylaw for Montague.	Planning Board, Town Planner	2013	Town funds; volunteer time

GOALS/OBJECTIVES	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/GROUP	START DATE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCE
A.5. Develop standards and priorities for Town acquisition of conservation land and conservation restrictions.	a. Identify and prioritize parcels of land in need of protection.	Open Space Committee, Town Planner	2011	Volunteer time; Town funds
	b. Evaluate town-owned tax title properties for their conservation and recreation value. Consider transfer of parcels with conservation value to the care and custody of the Conservation Commission.	Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Town Planner, Franklin Land Trust	2012	Town funds; volunteer time
A.6. Purchase or accept conservation restrictions from willing private landowners in Montague.	a. Develop criteria for evaluating offers of conservation restrictions, identify and secure funding sources for the purchase of restrictions.	Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Town Planner	2013	Volunteer time; Town funds
A.7. Consider adoption of a local wetland protection bylaw.	a. Research wetland protection bylaws in other towns and consider adoption of a local wetland protection bylaw for Montague.	Town Planner, Conservation Commission	2012	Town funds
A.8. Investigate funding mechanisms for Town acquisition of open space, including adoption of the Community Preservation Act by Town Meeting with at least a 1% property tax surcharge.	a. Identify and secure funding sources for open space acquisition.	Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Town Planner	2011	Town funds; volunteer time
	b. Conduct public outreach to educate residents about the Community Preservation Act and to determine the level of support for its passage.	Open Space Committee, Town Planner	2011	Town funds; volunteer time
A.9. Discourage expansion of infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer lines to farmland and areas of contiguous forest.	a. Review Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations and identify any needed changes.	Town Planner	2014	Town funds
A.10. Promote cleanup and redevelopment of abandoned and underutilized industrial and commercial properties.	a. Seek funding sources for the redevelopment of abandoned and underutilized industrial and commercial properties.	Board of Selectmen, Town Planner	2011	Town funds
	b. Work with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments through its Brownfields Program to assess and remediate contamination at brownfield sites.	Board of Selectmen, Town Planner	2011	Town funds; EPA Brownfields grants and loans
	c. Consider developing a façade improvement program for downtown areas.	Board of Selectmen, Town Planner	2012	Town funds; CDBG funds



GOALS/OBJECTIVES	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/GROUP	START DATE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCE
A.11. Participate in region-wide land use planning efforts to ensure protection of the resources Montague shares with other communities.	a. Maintain working relations with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments Planning Department.	Town Planner	Ongoing	Town funds
A.12. Encourage private donations of land or interest in land to state agencies and non-profit conservation organizations like land trusts.	a. Educate landowners about land conservation opportunities.	Open Space Committee	2013	Volunteer time
	b. Develop an information sheet to distribute at community events and for the Town website.	Open Space Committee	2013	Volunteer time
A.13. Educate landowners about the ecological importance of vernal pools and encourage their certification and protection.	a. Develop an information sheet to distribute at community events and for the Town website.	Open Space Committee	2014	Volunteer time
A.14. Educate people about existing environmental laws.	a. Develop strategies to minimize illegal dumping on the Montague Plains and along the banks of the Connecticut and Sawmill Rivers.	Conservation Commission, Town Planner, Connecticut River Watershed Council	2014	Town funds; volunteer time
Goal B: To protect Montague's drinking water				
B.1. Educate residents and local businesses, including agricultural businesses, on Best Management Practices (BMPs) for protecting water supplies.	a. Develop, fund & implement environmental educational programs in grades K-12 in Gill-Montague Regional School District and Franklin County Technical School.	Turners Falls Water Department, Montague Center Water Department, Board of Health, Gill-Montague Regional School District, Great Falls Discovery Center	2013	MET grants
	b. Mail information on BMPs for protecting groundwater quality and quantity to homeowners and businesses.	Turners Falls Water Department, Montague Center Water Department	2014	MET grants; DEP grants
B.2. Include the Delineated Zone II Recharge area for the new well being developed adjacent to Lake Pleasant in the Water Supply Protection District.	a. Establish a Water Supply Protection District overlay for the area that is located approximately from the east side of Lake Pleasant to the west side of Route 63, and from mile marker 11 on Route 63 north to the Millers River in Millers Falls.	Planning Board, Town Planner, Turners Falls Water District, Town Meeting	2010	Town funds; Volunteer time

GOALS/OBJECTIVES	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/GROUP	START DATE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCE
B.3. Research and implement policies to manage and control new residential development in water supply protection areas.	a. Assess current town regulations in comparison to other towns and evaluate need for changes.	Planning Board, Board of Health, Town Planner, Health Director	2013	Volunteer time; Town funds
	b. Develop wellhead protection plans.	Turners Falls Water Department, Montague Center Water Department, Board of Health	2013	MET grants; DEP grants
	c. Map stormwater discharges in water supply protection areas and develop a local stormwater control ordinance.	Planning Board, Town Planner	2014	Volunteer time; Town funds; MET grants; DEP grants
B.4. Develop local regulations to address use, storage and disposal of hazardous materials.	a. Identify known and potential sources of pollutants within water supply recharge areas and develop plans to minimize the risk of groundwater contamination.	Board of Health	2011	MET grants; DEP grants
	b. Research state laws and model bylaws to determine if Montague needs a new hazardous materials bylaw.	Board of Health	2012	Volunteer time
B.5. Prioritize acquisition of land critical to the protection of Montague's drinking water resources.	a. Assist water commissions in prioritizing land for protection.	Town Planner, Health Director, Water Commissioners	2013	Town funds
B.6. Implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) for road maintenance in water supply protection areas, including limited road salt and cleaning of catch basins.	a. Direct Montague Highway Department to develop BMPs for road maintenance in Zones I & II.	Board of Selectmen, Water Commissioners, Department of Public Works	2014	Volunteer time; Town funds
B.7. Develop water conservation strategies.	a. Review the recommendations of the 2003 Franklin County Regional Drinking Water Supply Study and the DEP website for strategy ideas.	Turners Falls Water Department, Montague Center Water Department	2011	Town funds
	b. Develop a brochure to distribute to consumers with their water bill.	Turners Falls Water Department, Montague Center Water Department	2012	MET grants; DEP Water Conservation Grant Program
Goal C: To ensure the continued viability of commercial agriculture and forestry in the Town of Montague and to conserve prime farmland soils.				
C.1. Educate residents about the role of commercial agriculture and forestry in ensuring the Town's fiscal stability and continued high quality of life.	a. Set up information booth on agriculture in Montague at community festivals.	Agricultural Commission, CISA, nonprofit organizations	2013	Volunteer time



GOALS/OBJECTIVES	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/GROUP	START DATE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCE
C.2. Determine whether interest exists to reactivate the Agricultural Commission to study and recommend policies to promote the viability of agriculture in Montague.	a. Seek potential members representing farm and forestry interests.	Board of Selectmen	2011	Volunteer time
C.3. Develop a Right to Farm Bylaw to protect farmers from complaints about odors and sounds due to normal farming activities.	a. Speak to farmers to learn about specific concerns, research model bylaws, and draft a Right to Farm Bylaw for adoption at Town Meeting.	Agricultural Commission, Town Planner, Town Meeting	2011	Town funds; Volunteer Time
C.4. Enhance the public visibility of agricultural businesses and promote purchase of local farm and forest products.	a. Develop brochure promoting Montague farms & forest product businesses.	Agricultural Commission, CISA, nonprofit organizations, Town Planner, Chamber of Commerce	2013	Volunteer time; Town funds
C.5. Promote conservation of valuable agricultural soils and permanent protection of farmland through the APR program, consistent with the plans of landowners.	a. Develop regulatory and other incentives to promote agricultural businesses and farmland conservation.	Planning Board, Agricultural Commission, Town Planner	2011	Volunteer time; Town funds
	b. Continue to contribute Town funds to the cost of APRs and encourage private contributions to Town Conservation Fund.	Conservation Commission	Ongoing	Town funds; APR program
	c. Use private and town funding to leverage bigger investments in protecting open space and supporting local farm businesses.	Board of Selectmen, Town Planner	2012	Town funds
	d. Offer assistance to farmers and woodlot owners who wish to plan for the conservation of their land.	Agricultural Commission	2012	Volunteer time
	e. Support statewide policies and participate in state programs designed to promote agriculture and enhance the viability of agricultural businesses.	Agricultural Commission	2013	Volunteer time
Goal D: To ensure that the Town of Montague continues to maintain and improve its recreational facilities in addition to delivering safe, accessible, quality recreational opportunities.				
D.1. Continue to maintain town-owned or managed parks including Unity Park, Highland Park, Peskeomskut Park, Montague Center Park, Norma's Park, and Rutter's Park.	a. Update Unity Park playground facilities to provide accessibility as per Americans With Disabilities Act standards.	Parks & Recreation Commission	2011 (planned)	Town funds; CDBG funds; DCS PARC funds

GOALS/OBJECTIVES	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/GROUP	START DATE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCE
D.2. Ensure affordability and accessibility of recreational areas and programs to all Montague residents, including development of at least one ADA-accessible facility.	a. Continue to conduct a fundraising campaign for Montague Parks and Recreation Programs.	Parks & Recreation Commission	Ongoing	volunteer time
	b. Update Unity Park playground facilities to provide accessibility as per Americans With Disabilities Act standards. <i>(This action also falls under Objective D.1.)</i>	Parks & Recreation Commission	2011 (planned)	Town funds; CDBG funds; DCS PARC funds
	c. Develop additional recreational programming for children.	Parks & Recreation Commission	Ongoing	Town funds
	d. Assess adequacy of existing recreational opportunities for senior citizens and consider development of new programs and facilities if found to be necessary.	Parks & Recreation Commission, Montague Senior Center	2012	Town funds; volunteer time
	e. Encourage the investment of federal, state, municipal, and private dollars for the purposes of maintaining and developing recreational facilities in Montague.	Parks & Recreation Commission	2013	Town funds
	f. Work with the Department of Fish and Game to replace the pedestrian bridge and to develop recreational trails and parking facilities at the North Street Wildlife Management Area that meet active and passive recreational needs.	DFG, Open Space Committee, Town Planner	2011	Volunteer time; Town funds
	g. Seek to secure trail easements from private landowners for passive recreational activities including hiking, jogging, nature observation, and cross-country skiing.	Open Space Committee, Board of Selectmen	2014	Volunteer time
D.3. Explore the feasibility of developing a park in Montague City.	a. Analyze town-owned property in Montague City and determine potential sites for a park.	Parks & Recreation Commission, Town Planner, Open Space Committee	2011	Town funds



GOALS/OBJECTIVES	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/GROUP	START DATE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCE
D.4. Encourage the maintenance of all existing recreational facilities including trails.	a. Promote ongoing maintenance and expansion of recreational areas and programs provided by SUEZ Energy under its Federal Energy Regulatory Commission License, including but not limited to parks, the Canalside Rail Trail and boat access to the Connecticut River.	SUEZ Energy, Board of Selectmen, Town Planner, Open Space Committee	Ongoing	SUEZ Energy; volunteer time; Town funds
	b. Promote ongoing private maintenance and management of Thomas Memorial Golf Course.	Thomas Memorial Golf Course, Board of Selectmen, Town Planner, Open Space Committee	Ongoing	Thomas Memorial Golf Course; volunteer time; Town funds
D.5. Explore cost-effective methods for developing safe bike routes between village centers and areas of interest.	a. Support the implementation of the Franklin County Bikeway, a significant portion of which is located in Montague.	Town Planner, Franklin Regional Council of Governments	Ongoing	Town funds
Goal E: To increase public support for the conservation of Montague's natural resources.				
E.1. Educate Montague residents about existing areas of protected open space and promote use of lands that provide public access for recreation.	a. Develop literature on parks, recreation and open space areas in Montague and swimming areas in nearby towns.	Parks & Recreation Director, Town Planner	2014	Town funds; Volunteer time
E.2. Promote environmental education in Montague schools, with a special focus on local resources.	a. Seek funding for visiting naturalist program.	Open Space Committee; Gill-Montague Regional School District, Great Falls Discovery Center	2012	Volunteer time
	b. Distribute copies of Open Space & Recreation Plan to all public schools in Montague and Greenfield Community College.	Town Planner	2011	Town funds
E.3. Encourage discussion and promote cooperation between Town Boards, committees and special districts about benefits of conservation.	a. Hold an annual event for Town Boards at a park or conservation area.	Open Space Committee	Ongoing	Volunteer time
E.4. Promote Montague's historic and rural character and outdoor recreation opportunities to tourists.	a. Create a brochure highlighting key historic properties and landscapes.	Turners Falls RiverCulture, Great Falls Discovery Center, Historical Commission	2013	Volunteer time

GOALS/OBJECTIVES	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/GROUP	START DATE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCE
	b. Create a brochure highlighting outdoor recreation opportunities.	Open Space Committee, Parks & Recreation Director	2014	Volunteer time; Town funds
Goal F: To safeguard the future of the Montague Plains.				
F.1. Partner with the state Department of Fish and Game to improve management of the Plains.	a. Work with state Department of Fish and Game to develop recreational trails and parking facilities on the Montague Plains.	DFG, Friends of the Plains, Conservation Commission	2011-2012	Volunteer time; DFG staff time
	b. Support and publicize ongoing research on the ecology of the Plains.	Friends of the Plains, Great Falls Discovery Center	Ongoing	Volunteer time
F.2. Support formation of volunteer “Friends of the Plains” group to assist with stewardship and management of the Montague Plains.	a. Sponsor an annual field trip to the Plains during Biodiversity Days in June.	Town Planner, DFG, and Friends of Great Falls Discovery Center	Ongoing	Town funds; volunteer time
F.3. Work closely with Northeast Utilities and other landowners on the Plains to ensure that development proposals minimize impact on Plains ecology, especially endangered species.	a. Prepare development guidelines for the Plains.	Town Planner, Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Friends of the Plains	2013	Town funds; volunteer time
Note: DFG is the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game; DCR is the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation; NRCS is the Natural Resources Conservation Service; MET is the Massachusetts Environmental Trust; DEP is the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection; DCS is the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services; CDBG is the Community Development Block Grant program; CISA is Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture.				

